

**BOROUGH OF GREEN TREE
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MARCH 9, 2022**

CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Green Tree Planning Commission met on Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. in the Sycamore Room of the Green Tree Municipal Center, 10 West Manilla Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15220.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Cheryl Bakin, Chair
Firas Abdelahad (7:02pm)
Robert McWilliams
Nathan Pzsint
Jessica Swiech
Christine Short

Also Present:

Todd Carter, Code Enforcement Officer
Kim Beck, Stenographer

Absent:

Al Erwin

HEARING OF THE CITIZENS

There was no one present who wished to be heard.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Ms. Bakin

1. Ms. Bakin introduced Mr. Nathan Pzsint and welcomed him to the Planning Commission. Mr. Pzsint was formally appointed to Planning Commission at the March 7 Council meeting.
2. Ms. Bakin stated that Ms. Judy Miller, Borough Manager, informed her that there is a Planning Commission training session that is available to the members through continuing education. Ms. Bakin suggested that any interested members meet at the Green Tree Borough Building on March 22 to take the class together.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

February 9, 2022

Ms. Short made a motion, seconded by Ms. Swiech, to approve the February 9, 2022 minutes as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

ADVISORY DISCUSSION:

Review of Site Plan for Addition of a Warehouse at 1079 Greentree Road

Mr. Charles Bickel and Mr. Brian Bickel from Ace Hardware were present to discuss the proposed warehouse addition at 1079 Greentree Rd.

Mr. C. Bickel presented two surveys of the proposed warehouse addition. The first survey proposed a 38-foot by 50-foot addition which would add roughly 1900 square feet to the current store. The second survey was similar, but with a slightly smaller addition. Mr. C. Bickel explained that they were interested in adding

a warehouse in the back of their building so they could keep more product on hand, so the residents of Green Tree had more options when they were looking for specific products. When asked, Mr. C. Bickel explained that the addition would be single story, around 12 feet, with a pitched roof.

Ms. Bakin asked if adding a warehouse to the property would affect their current parking situation. Mr. C. Bickel stated that the warehouse would be built on space that was currently being used for other storage, so parking would not be affected. He mentioned that they were considering extending their parking lot 6 feet into Lot 16, which they also owned. He explained that expanding this parking lot would make it easier for vehicles to get in and out of the parking lot. Planning Commission discussed the possible expansion of the parking lot, and whether a retaining wall would be necessary.

Mr. Abdelahad asked if the warehouse would be built on asphalt or gravel. Mr. C. Bickel stated that they were intending on building the warehouse on asphalt. Mr. Carter said that if they decided to proceed with expanding the parking lot with asphalt, they might need storm water detention with the extra paved surface. He agreed to research the ordinance to find out if the expanded parking lot would be large enough to require the storm water detention.

Mr. Pazsint asked if the warehouse addition would affect the flow of traffic with trucks needing to reach the warehouse. Mr. C. Bickel stated that the trucks would be backing into the property in the same manner that they currently do, so the addition of the warehouse would not affect the flow of traffic in that regard.

Mr. Carter stated that if Ace Hardware was interested in moving forward with the proposal, they would need to get approval from the City of Pittsburgh. He explained that Green Tree Borough would require a 20-foot buffer at the edge of their property, and that buffer would technically be in the portion of their property that is in the City of Pittsburgh. Mr. Carter said that if the City of Pittsburgh didn't require the buffer, then Green Tree Borough likely wouldn't require the buffer, since it would technically be outside of their jurisdiction. Discussion continued regarding what would be required for the buffer, and exactly where along the property the buffer would need to be.

Mr. Carter explained that after they got approval or confirmation from the City of Pittsburgh regarding the 20-foot buffer, the next step would be for Ace Hardware to file a formal application with Planning Commission, along with a Conditional Use application. He then gave Mr. C. Bickel and Mr. B. Bickel a list of the information they would need to gather before filing a formal application with the borough, including which size of warehouse Ace Hardware was going to propose and more information about the expansion of the parking lot, if Ace Hardware decided to move in that direction.

When asked, Mr. C. Bickel stated that they would be using existing lighting for the warehouse addition and shouldn't need to add additional lighting. Ms. Bakin suggested that Mr. Bickel have the architect include the current lighting elements on the site plan that is included with the formal application. Mr. C. Bickel agreed that the site plan would show the current lighting, along with showing that the warehouse addition would have an overhead door.

There was a brief discussion regarding repaving the parking lot, and what permits would be required, if any. Mr. Carter stated that he would research and give Mr. Bickel more information regarding repaving, but that a permit would be necessary if they intended on expanding the parking lot into Lot 16.

Ms. Bakin thanked Mr. C. Bickel and Mr. B. Bickel for attending the meeting and discussing the plans of their expansion with Planning Commission. She said that once they had all of the answers and information they needed, they could file a formal application with Planning Commission and move forward with the process.

CONTINUED REVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Ms. Bakin said that she had spoken to Mike Wheeler of Coldwell Banker with details about putting the Comprehensive Plan survey in the April issue of the Green Tree Times. Ms. Swiech asked how residents would be able to return the survey. Planning Commission discussed various ways residents could be encouraged to complete and return the surveys, including filling out the survey on the website, mailing the survey to the Borough Administrative Office, and the possibility of putting a box in the Green Tree Public Library for residents to return physical copies of the surveys.

Ms. Bakin stated that she had a meeting scheduled with Kossman development on March 22 to discuss the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Bakin confirmed that she is working on setting up a meeting with PennDOT in the upcoming months to discuss their plans for projects in and around Green Tree Borough over the next ten years.

Mr. McWilliams stated that he had given copies of the surveys to representatives of Mt. Pisgah Church and New Apostolic Church and was waiting for those to be returned to him. Mr. Abdelahad mentioned that he had been attempting to contact other churches in the community and was hoping to have some information soon.

Ms. Short was in contact with Dr. Stropkaj at Keystone Oaks School district, who said that he would like to see more communication between the school district and the borough, specifically regarding advertising each other's events on their websites. Dr. Stropkaj also indicated to Ms. Short that the school district did not anticipate any major changes in enrollment over the next five to ten years. Ms. Short said she was still communicating with the school in an attempt to reinstate the Junior member of Council for Green Tree.

Ms. Swiech read some of the responses to the Comprehensive Plan survey she received from the principal of Aiken Elementary, Mr. Dave Thomas. One of the comments that Ms. Swiech read was "With regard to the walking track and its proximity to the school, it is a huge safety concern with the lack of solid fence." She said that the Mr. Thomas noted that he would like to have a fence with a gate that he would be able to close during school hours, when the children were outside having recess. Mr. Abdelahad asked if any police officers were present during recess hours. Planning Commission discussed safety concerns regarding the walking track, and different options to alleviate some of those concerns.

Mr. Thomas also noted that Aiken Elementary is what he considers to be a "transient" school, meaning that residents are moving in and out of the area while their children are in elementary school. The number of students in the school remains the same at about 220 per year. Mr. Pazzint agreed, stating that couples tend to come into the area in six-year cycles. They will typically buy their first house when they are pregnant or have one child, and then once their family grows, some residents decide to move out of the area to find a larger home. Green Tree is an attractive area for first time home buyers, but due to the disproportionate number of smaller homes in the area, many couples end up moving out of the area when they need a larger home for their growing family. Planning Commission discussed options to retain new families long term, including possible locations where new houses or condos could be developed.

Mr. Pazzint noted that Planning Commission should consider the future of Foster Plaza. He said that if Green Tree follows the development course of downtown Pittsburgh, then some of the office buildings could be converted into condos. Developing condos in Green Tree could be an attractive housing option, especially for older residents who may be looking to downsize but want to stay in the Borough. Planning Commission discussed various options for Foster Plaza, including condos, restaurants, and entertainment venues.

DISCUSSION REGARDING ACCESSORY USES AND POTENTIAL ADDITIONS TO THE ZONING USE TABLE

Ms. Bakin stated that she wanted to have a conversation with Kate Diersen, Borough Solicitor, before moving forward with the Planning Commission considering adding accessory uses to the Zoning Use Table. She noted that the amended Zoning Ordinance had been sent to Allegheny County for review. Once their review comes back, the ordinance will go to Council for their review and possible vote.

Ms. Bakin said that Planning Commission needed to begin looking into what recommendations they would want to give regarding the current commercial districts in the borough. With the number of vacant office buildings in the borough, Planning Commission should consider other uses for those buildings. She suggested that Planning Commission consider many different options for these districts so they could be discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Pzsint suggested that allowing residential condos or apartments in the commercial districts could potentially bolster the tax base.

Mr. Pzsint noted that 987 Greentree Road had a lot that, if purchased by the Borough, could be used as a municipal lot and alleviate much of the current parking issues that residents are facing when trying to visit businesses on Greentree Road. Planning Commission had a discussion regarding specifics of the property and the value it could add to Greentree Road, if used properly.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Swiech made a motion, seconded by Mr. McWilliams, to adjourn the meeting at 8:13pm.

Motion was carried unanimously.

Cheryl Bakin, Chairman

Firas Abdelahad, Secretary